

# NORTHERN NEVADA'S GROWER'S GUIDE

Growing HUGE Tomatoes in the High Desert

*(And other stuff, too!)*



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# INTRODUCTION

## It's Time to GROW!

Howdy, thanks for checking out our all-natural, enviro-friendly grower's guide!

We've done all the hard, hands-in-the-dirt work for the past 20+ years to ensure you can create harmony between plants and the soil they live in—making for one heck of a wildly-productive growing environment.

### **WARNING!**

The results you'll experience when following Full Circle Soil & Compost's advice will have you high-fiving your soil-covered hands together.

This guide is for serious tomato growers only. Following these steps may result in HUUUGE tomato plants. We're talking giant towers of tomatoes with upwards of 50 pounds of fruit PER PLANT! It's no joke. Our customers do it every season right here in Northern Nevada! So you better love tomatoes. You AND your family, friends, neighbors, mailman, you-name-it ... because, if you follow this guide, you're gonna need their help with all the eating, canning, storing and enjoying.

*Sound good?  
Then let's get growing!*

# PREPPING

## Getting Your Growing Area Primed

Planning where in your yard you're going to plant is a big choice—so is how you're going to plant. Below is a quick look at the common ways to grow huge tomatoes (and other stuff).

### SUNNY DISPOSITION

Tomatoes love sunshine. Pick a spot where your plants can soak it up for 6+ hours a day. If you're growing next to a fence or a wall of your home, know that those areas soak in heat and insulate the area somewhat, which tomatoes and peppers love.

### GET A RAISE

Got clay? Or some tough, dry salty Nevada soil? We highly recommend raised garden beds. This gives you a nice contained garden that's elevated off the ground and makes playing in the dirt much easier on the back and knees.

Make yourself a four-sided box or rectangle by securing four pieces of lumber or reclaimed wood together. Set this wood frame on the flat growing area of your choice and fill it with 8 inches of uber-

nutritious garden soil, like Full Circle's KICK, which is the best on the market for planting in raised beds (if we do say so ourselves).

### KICK It Up a Notch

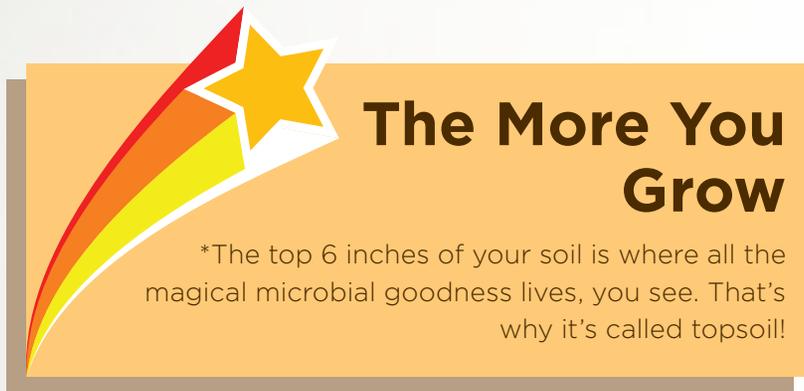
Tomatoes crave LOTS of nutrients. Our plant-loving KICK garden soil is jam-packed with more nutritious topsoils, composts, microbes and other beyond-organic harmony than you can shake a trowel at (be careful, trowel-shaking can lead to injury).



# PREPPING (CONT'D)

## “AMISH-STYLE” PARADISE

For old-fashioned, in-the-ground gardens, break up the top few inches of soil. No need to rototill; go “Amish style” and use a spading fork or shovel. Most of your soil’s nutrients are within the top few inches



of soil\*, so rototilling can do more harm than good. Next, topdress with a 1/4 inch of Full Circle’s BOOST, our powerful, all-natural soil amendment. BOOST is so fresh and alive that rich nutrients will trickle down and bolster your existing soil’s health, creating a soil ecosystem that’s beneficial to plants.

## FREEDOM, EVEN IN A CONTAINER

If your container planting, drill holes in the bottom so water can drain out—keeping your containers free from dingy, moldy bottom spaces where bad bacteria like to grow. We recommend drilling holes in a star pattern in the bottom of your container. Also, if you’re setting your containers directly on the Earth, know that healthy tomatoes like spreading their roots and will explore the world beneath them. Soar has been designed to provide lots of air to help roots go deep down in containers.

## Container No-Brainer

Planting in a container? Fill it with SOAR, our all-natural magic-packed potting mix, which keeps plants 3X moister, fights drought, and fuels big growth. Ideal for starting seeds! Leave 2 to 4 inches between topsoil and rim for ideal watering space.

# PLANTING

## Let's get GROWING!

### Seedlings

Starting your tomatoes and other plants from seeds is rewarding. You get to see them go from a seed the size of a pinhead to a towering, wildly productive plant all in one growing season. And what's better than things that are rewarding? Things that are rewarding and easy. Growing from seeds happens in three steps:

#### 1 **START 'EM IN SEED-STARTING TRAYS (OR DIXIE-STYLE CUPS)**

You can get set starting kits at any nursery or big box store (support your local nursery; they're way



cooler). Using our SOAR as a starting soil in each "cell" of the seed-starting tray and push your seeds into the soil about a quarter inch. We

always put multiple seeds (up to 10) in each cell or cup because you can separate the roots during the next step. Moisten all soil and place in an area where they

can stay undisturbed except to re-water. In our dry climate, we recommend using the lid that came with your seed starting kit to keep the seeds in a humid environment. You can also place your tray in a plastic storage bin with a lid to retain moisture. Your seeds don't need sunlight to sprout, so put the contraption in a warm area like a closet. Once the seeds sprout they must have adequate light immediately or they will get long and lanky looking for the sun. Florescent 4-foot shop lights work great! Put them close to the seedlings (2" away) for 16 hours each day.

#### 2 **DUNK 'EM IN A ROOT DRENCH**

When you're ready to move your seeds into bigger individual pots to let them spread their leaves, give them a dunk in a root drench. This is also the time to dunk the roots and gently separate any plants that grew together in the same cells. But, what's a root drench you ask. A root drench gives young plants a shot of biology as they're getting plucked from one growing environment to the next. It helps make this transition more seamless. To prepare your root drench, fill a bowl or bucket with 3 oz of PUNCH —

# PLANTING (CONT'D)

our all-natural “worm brew” — and 1 gal of H<sub>2</sub>O. Dunk your plants roots into the mixture before placing them in their large growing containers (or their final growing destination if it's time. Your newly planted 'mater will love those billions of microorganisms. Tomatoes grow roots out of their stems so plant them deep up to their first 2 leaves.

## **3 STICK THOSE CUTE LITTLE SUCKERS IN THE GROUND!**

You're little guys are (about to be) all grown up. In order to grow big and tall, it's time to get them outside (after the last freeze has hit our area). Again provide the plants with a root drench and plant them into the ground, a raised bed filled with KICK or into a large container filled with SOAR. See the section on transplanting for a little more information. You can also plant the plants up to 1 month earlier in a Wall-O-Water to help them get a start on growing huge roots.

### ***Here's a Sample Timeline for Starting Plants from Seeds in Northern Nevada:***

- Start your seeds at the end of February or early March.
- Once they sprout (about 7 days), move the entire tray into the sunlight by a window and keep moist by watering once a day. Ease them into the sunlight; don't put them by a window with 8 hours of direct sun their first day out of their dark sprouting environment (they'll sunburn and die).
- Once they start to outgrow their cells (about 3-4 weeks), transplant them into their own individual containers (like yogurt cups, empty pints of ice cream, or anything else you can fill with soil and punch holes in the bottom for drainage). Continue to leave them in an area where they can get lots sunlight.
- After you're hopeful the last freeze has hit our part of the country, transplant those little guys into their final growing destination!

# PLANTING

## Let's talk TRANSPLANTS!

- 1 If you bought plants in plantable containers, break up those biodegradable containers gently with your fingers to set the roots free.
- 2 Spread out the root base gently by hand to boost connectivity and airflow.
- 3 Dunk the roots in a root drench.
- 4 Stick the plant in a hole deep enough to cover the root base and a few inches of the stalk. Why? Because, unlike many plants, tomatoes can grow roots right out of their stalks!
- 5 Time to BOOST. Lay down a 1/4 inch-thick blanket of BOOST in a 12-to-36-inch circle around your plant, then water. No need to work BOOST in; those ultra-rich nutrients and billions of microorganisms will hitch a ride down to the plant's roots with that H<sub>2</sub>O.
- 6 Use Full Circle PROTECT to keep the soil warm, cozy and evenly moist. This will promote roots that feed near the surface AND help you water less (up to 50%).



### The More You Grow

#### A note on selecting plants from the store

Did you know when a plant feels “threatened,” it produces fruit in a last-ditch effort at carrying on its family name. Store-bought plants with bunches of fruit might make you hungry, but they’re not always your best bet, as they are likely just feeling threatened because they aren’t getting watered enough, they have outgrown their container, they have zapped the soil of all nutrients or a handful of other reasons. Look for healthy, lively, happy plants (regardless of amount of fruit).

# WATERING

## Ultimate Watering Tips

You want your 'maters to be lushes, but NOT drunks. Healthy tomatoes are occasional drinkers, so here's how to build good, moderate drinking habits in your plants.

First, know that tomatoes like to drink a lot of water at once, but don't like to be constantly living in a boggy wetland. Water your plants every 2-3 days depending on how fast they are drying out. By using our products, you're letting your tomato plants live in drought-resistant, water-preserving soils.

### Container No-Brainer

Planting in a pot, wine barrel, old bathtub, etc? Drill holes in the bottom to prevent mold and funk from excess water. (We still like drilling in star patterns.)

## *How to Water Your Tomato Plants Like a Boss*

*If you water with a ...*

### **HOSE**

Water for about 5 minutes on the soaker setting. If you're watering container plants, there will be about 2" of standing water above soil. Farmer Craig likes using an open hose, as sprayer heads restrict the water output.

### **WATERING CAN**

Don't overestimate these low-flowers! Water, refill & repeat for about 5 minutes of continuous watering. Count the gallons to see how much your plants take and keep track.

### **DRIP**

Set for more water, fewer times — about 3 times a week. If you never increase the drip as your plants grow, you will limit their size. Baby plants drink less water than mature ones.

# WATERING (CONT'D)

## WHY GO BIG WHEN YOU CAN GO HUGE WITH WALLS-O-WATER

Putting a Wall-O-Water around your tomato will keep it warm & cozy during freezes AND cool & comfy in the heat. You can remove it before the plant gets too big, but we suggest leaving it on all season. Although these weird-looking things won't win you the best in show, if you're going for "best in GROW"... use 'em all season long!

You can purchase a Wall-o-Water online by Googling their name. Or, you can try making your own with recycled plastic tubing.

*Search around the Web for ideas!*



# MAINTAINING

## Keep 'Em Happy!

### *Hungry, Hungry Tomatoes*

Tomatoes LOVE nutrients and they'll take a lot of them out of your soil. Here's how to keep soil nice and fertile—and keep hungry tomato plants happy.

#### **PUNCH (LIQUID VERMICOMPOST)**

This “All-natural Worm Brew” contains billions of beneficial microorganisms for your plants to enjoy. Mixed into an H2O spray bottle, spritz plants every 2 weeks on soil (roots will eat at their leisure) and leaves (will eat right then). Mixed into an H2O spray bottle, spritz plants every 2 weeks on the leaves (roots will eat at their leisure and leaves will eat right then). Leaf food creates a happy plant, making it a more efficient root feeder.

#### **BOOST (COMPOST)**

An all-natural compost soil amendment / fertilizer like BOOST replenishes soil with the nutrients plants crave. Lay down a inch-thick blanket of BOOST in an 8-to-12 inch diameter around your plant, then water; repeat 2 to 4 times through growing season (about every 45 days).

#### **PUNCH: EVERY 2 WEEKS**

BOOST: 2 to 4 times through growing season (about every 45 days)



# TROUBLESHOOTING

*Tomato Doctor, aka Farmer Craig, answers a handful of questions from growers with unhappy or sick tomatoes. Read on to help your tomatoes get better and back to being their happy selves.*

**Q It's harvest time and my tomatoes are cracking. They would be so plump and beautiful without those cracks. What's going on?**

**A** Don't be too alarmed, this is not due to an illness or a disease. Most tomatoes crack or split because their skins can't grow at the same rapid pace as their insides. Tomatoes will bulge and grow after a big soak if they haven't have consistent watering prior. A heavy rain that soaks your plants more than you usually do can cause this. Keep your watering as consistent as you can and you'll lessen this to some extent. Heirloom tomatoes just have a knack for cracking. Kind of the cost of doing business with these delicious sons of guns.

Don't toss out those cracked tomatoes. Chop off the cracked portion and get to eating. Remember, this is not a disease at all.

**Q Help! My tomatoes all have soft black bottoms.**

**A** Fear not, this also is NOT a disease. It's more of a nutrient deficiency that you can correct

if you're early in the season still. This condition is called "Blossom End Rot," and it's quite common in container planting. See, your tomatoes went and sucked all the delicious nutrients, namely calcium, out of their container and now the less-than-desirable are showing on the tomato fruits themselves. Blossom End Rot can also happen if you're watering your plants inconsistently. Keep their water patterns consistent. *\*Using Full Circle's PROTECT will keep the soil evenly moist and minimize cracking.*

## HERE'S WHAT YOU DO:

- 1.** The black part of the fruit is not a disease and will not spread to the other part of the fruit. You can let them continue growing and cut off the end when it comes time to eat them. OR, you can pluck every affected fruit from the plant and let new fruit bloom. Your choice.
- 2.** Correct any inconsistent watering and cover with Full Circle's PROTECT mulch.
- 3.** Grab a thing of Coral Calcium and follow the directions for replenishing calcium.

***Want to prevent Blossom End Rot? Try putting some crushed eggshells in the planting holes when you plant your tomatoes next season.***

# TROUBLESHOOTING (CONT'D)

**Q** My tomato plants are gigantic, but I don't have any tomatoes. What gives?

**A** BIG plants are cool. BIG plants that produce are cooler. If you have a massive tomato plant with lots of foliage, that's good. But, you're asking, when is it going to produce some tomatoes? Well, tomato plants and smart buggers and they might not be producing because of temperature, inconsistent watering or other reasons. It has nothing to do with needing two plants (one male and one female) in order to produce. That's a misconception.

Producing fruit takes a lot of energy from the plant, and the plant gets energy from the sun. If it's not getting enough light, it doesn't have enough energy to produce fruit. If you can move it into a spot with more sun, do. Also, change the energy from growing to fruiting with an easy foliar spray. Use 2 tablespoons of plain household ammonia and 1 gallon of water. Put in a spray bottle and spray on the leaves.

**Q** I have what seems like a million green tomatoes; when are they going to ripen so I can eat them?

**A** Fear not, but be patient. There are multiple reasons your tomatoes aren't turning color to show you they are ripe and ready to eat. Here are the most common reasons:

- 1.** Not enough time. Some tomatoes take their sweet time to turn colors. Have to wait it out. You're on their time.
- 2.** Too chilly: If temperatures have been quite chilly quite often, you need some warm weather to get those babies to turn. Have to wait for warm weather. You're on Mother Nature's time.
- 3.** Too hot. If the temperatures have been too hot too often, you need some cooler weather to set in to coax your tomatoes into turning. Have to wait for cooler weather. Keep watering; don't let them dry out. Again, you're on Mother Nature's time.

**TRY THIS!** Use a "floating row cover" to keep the plant base temporarily warmer in cool temperatures and temporarily cooler in extreme hot temperatures. The cover breathes, so you don't have to take it off every day.

# PROTECT-ING

## Keep 'Em Safe!

**DANGER!** The high desert can be an unforgiving place for tomatoes and other plants.

### QUESTION:

Once your plants start to crop up, how do you keep them safe till harvest-time?

### ANSWER:

By **PROTECT-ING** them with our proprietary mulch.

*Apply a cozy, 1-inch-deep blanket over your soil. That's nice!*

- ✓ Shades soil from sun & heat
- ✓ Withstands wind angry cloud blowing?
- ✓ Suppresses weeds
- ✓ Resists drought, retains moisture
- ✓ Insulates soil from cold snowflakes
- ✓ Fights fire
- ✓ Saves water watering can
- ✓ Looks good!



*“Protector of the (Growing) Universe”*

# HARVESTING

## Pick 'Em!

### HONEST QUESTION:

I did everything you said and my tomatoes are starting to blow UP! But ... how do I know when to pick 'em?

### HONEST ANSWER:

We could get into scientific averages that suggest when and how frequently to harvest every species of tomato, based on size, color, shape, smell, micro-climate, proximity to other fruit, etc. BUT, the rule-of-green-thumb around here is ... If it looks like it's time to pick your tomatoes, then it probably is! If you find that you picked a batch a little early, leave them sitting out on the counter for a few days and they'll ripening up. If you find you picked them too late and they were mushy, pick a little earlier next time (duh).



## WARNING!

You're gonna have a LOT of tomatoes. If you haven't enlisted help to enjoy them all yet, now is a good time to go through your tomato-loving contacts.

## *Grow Happy, Grow Healthy... All Season Long!*

Dig the info in this guide? Plenty where that came from! Visit [fullcirclecompost.com](http://fullcirclecompost.com) for more expert resources on amazing growing in Nevada and way beyond.

We offer growers and gardeners useful advice and the all-natural compost, soil blends, mulches and other stuff they need to create nutrient-rich soils for lively, happy plants to flourish, even in tough conditions.

Stay tuned for more Growing Guides to come. In the meantime, be sure to follow us online for more plant-tastic tips all season long!

